



From June 2023
(Volume 144)

USA Road Trip#4





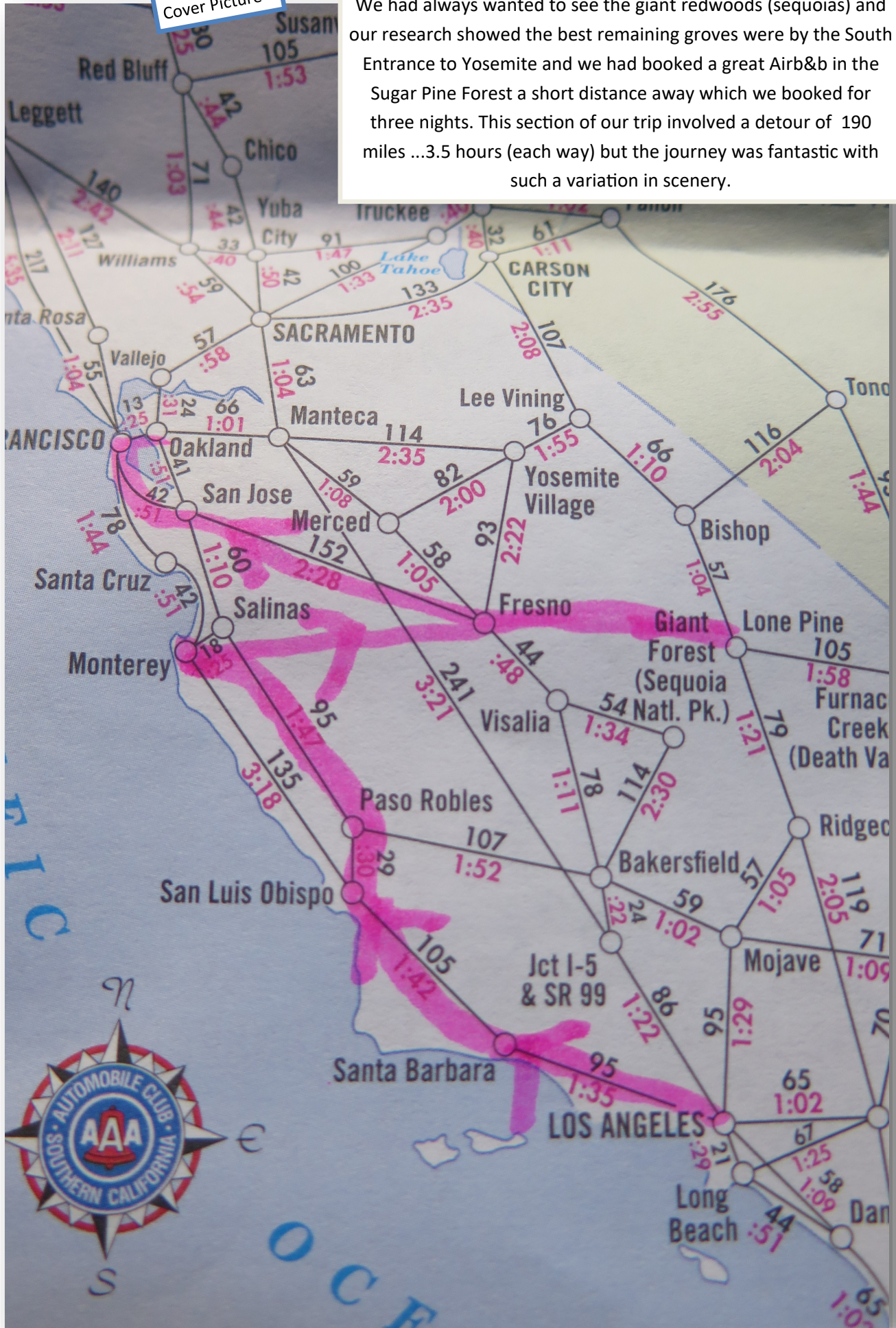
Photo History



Fishman on Pier 29 opposite Alcatraz in San Francisco

Cover Picture

We had always wanted to see the giant redwoods (sequoias) and our research showed the best remaining groves were by the South Entrance to Yosemite and we had booked a great Airb&b in the Sugar Pine Forest a short distance away which we booked for three nights. This section of our trip involved a detour of 190 miles ...3.5 hours (each way) but the journey was fantastic with such a variation in scenery.





We drove through miles and miles of pistachio plantations, and orange groves and peach orchards that stretched endlessly into the distance





Photo History



Really 'hidden-away' and hard to find but a real little paradise



Chiela's Sugar Pine Cabin

This is a cozy and spacious downstairs bedroom with a nice comfortable Queen Bed, equipped with a Smart TV, Retro Styled Refrigerator, Microwave, Electric Kettle and Keurig Coffee Maker all ready to use, you will feel like you are back in time at this cozy hidden space. Clean towels and basic bathroom amenities are also provided. Wall heater is available to use because even on the warmest days of summer, the nights are cool and it gets chilly in the morning.

Cabin is located in the beautiful mountains of the Sierra National Forest. It is (8 Miles) 20 minutes from Yosemite National Park South Entrance. A Large deck is the new addition that will enhance your outdoor experience, from the deck you can see the beautiful view of the mountain, you will hear the cool rushing waters of Lewis Creek making its way down the mountain, watch the busy little Stellar Jays, Squirrels and Humming Birds as they go about their daily routines. You may even spot an occasional Bear. You can also hear the Steam Powered "Logger Train" of the Madera Sugar Pine Logging Company as it embarks on its hourly tours through the beautiful timbered Mountain side.

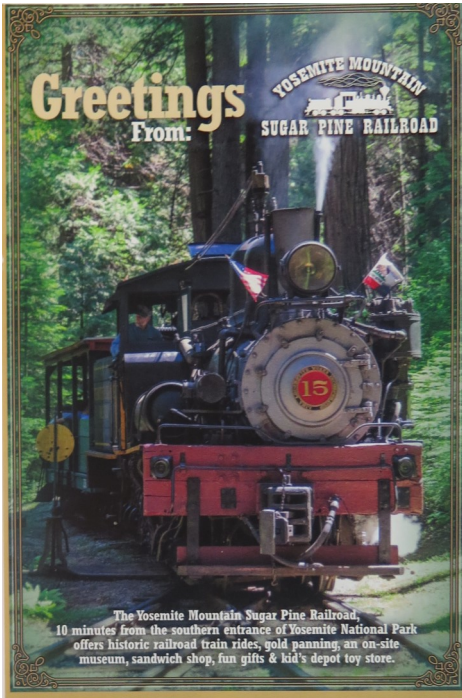


Photo History

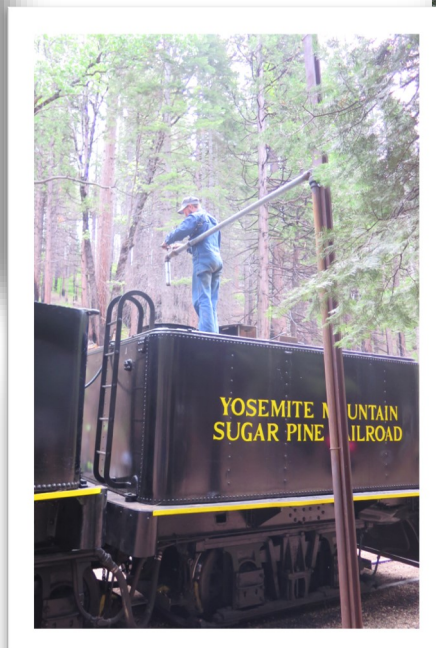


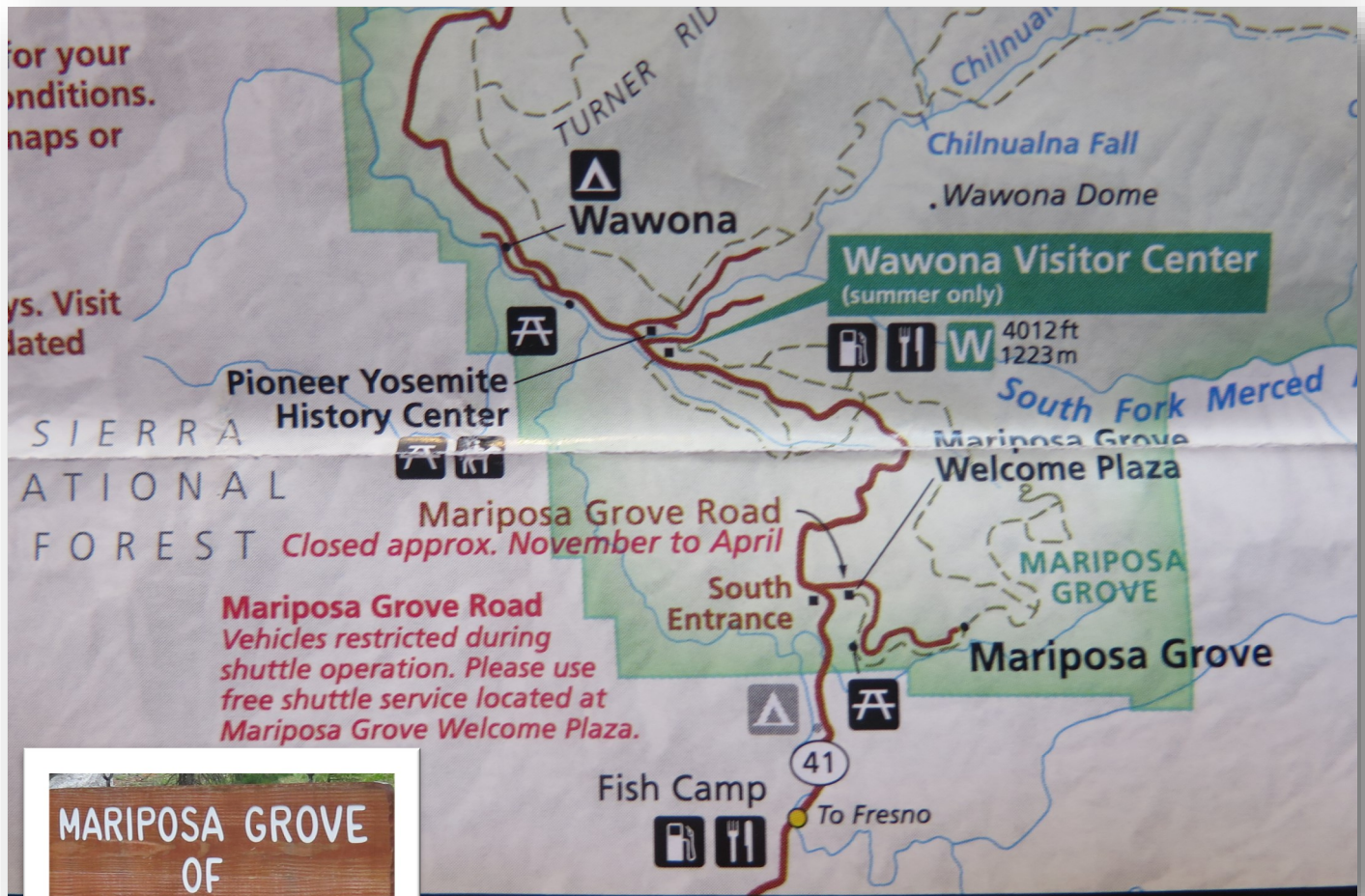


Photo History



The Sugar pine Railroad used reconstructed old rail stock on the original logging narrow gauge track deep into the forest and was great fun





MARIPOSA GROVE
OF
GIANT SEQUOIAS

SEQUOIA GROVES Giant sequoias dwarf even the largest pine and fir trees that live among them. They are descendants of an ancient line of trees and can live for over two thousand years. Their trunks can reach over 25 feet thick! As symbols of longevity and strength, the giant sequoias played a major role in the creation of what is now Yosemite National Park. Throughout the National Park System, thousands of rangers wear uniform belts and hatbands embossed with images of the cones and foliage of these significant trees.

President Lincoln signed the bill that set aside the Mariposa Grove, along with scenic Yosemite Valley, in 1864. In the years following this action, a fire started in the grove, and we began a 100-year history of protecting these beloved trees from fire. While our intentions were good, we were contributing to the loss of what we cared about so much. Through research and experimentation we discovered that fire actually promotes reproduction of these giant trees. It clears away the competing firs and cedars and exposes bare mineral soil for the tiny seeds to take root.



Photo History

The Mariposa Grove of over 500 giant sequoias which are now protected. The shuttle bus took us to the start of the board walk. Fallen trees are left in situ and are an incredible size. Information is well displayed along the board walk which snakes uphill to where the even more incredible trees are growing. The statistics are amazing and it was so worth our big detour



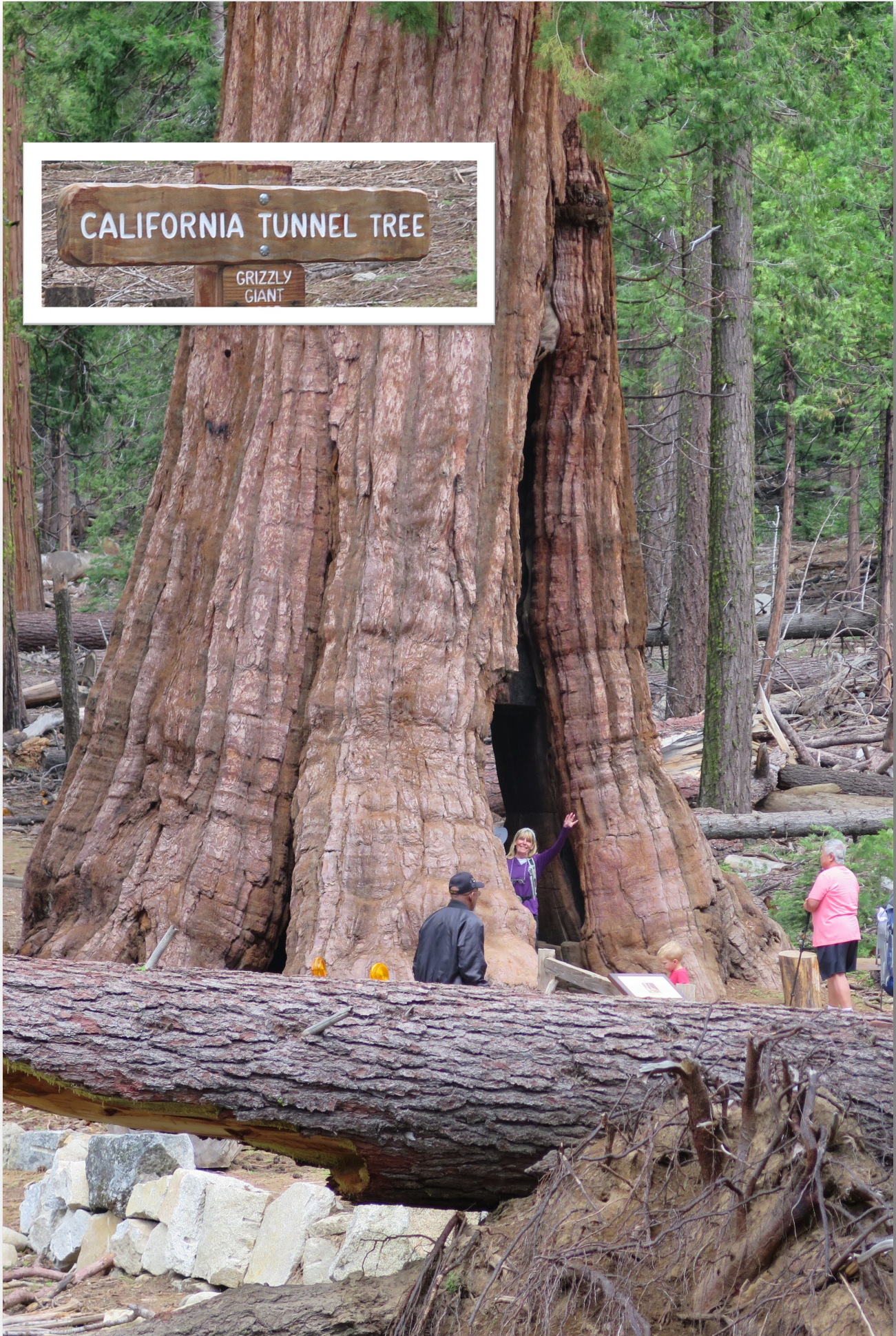


The Fallen Monarch

An enduring mystery, no one knows how old this tree is or when it fell. Initially encountered by the Traditionally Associated Tribes of Yosemite and later photographed with countless visitors, it remains a memorable feature of the grove.

Although the bark and sapwood have decayed, the remaining heartwood is fortified with tannins. This natural compound protects the tree, and it may take several more centuries to decompose.











Enduring Giant



The Grizzly Giant is one of the Mariposa Grove's most notable trees. Standing 209 feet (63.7 m) tall, it is 28 feet (8.5 m) in diameter and 96 feet (29 m) in circumference at its base.

Notice the blackened fire scars around the tree's base. Fires have burned here once every five to twenty years on average.



A giant sequoia is shown here in relation to the Statue of Liberty, people next to a shuttle bus, and a mature ponderosa pine.

The Grizzly Giant, like other older sequoia trees and those damaged by lightning or fire, has a snag top due to loss of sapwood and a reduced ability to move water from roots to crown.

Look about halfway up for a large branch bending skyward. At nearly seven feet (2 m) in diameter, it is larger than the trunks of most of the trees around you.



Many of these old sequoias show signs of old forest fires but are still living





Photo History



Close by our 'hideaway' was Bass Lake. This recreational lake hosted many summer homes which had their own moorings and pontoons. It was spoilt for us because no provision had been made to allow walking around the lake. There were picnic areas and parking areas for RV's but access to the water-side was impossible. There were restaurants overlooking the lake and many 'residents' could be seen on golf buggies on the small narrow streets





Photo History





We made the best of Bass Lake with an ice cream soda in one place and a casual 'fish and chips' in the other...



Bass Lake is a popular recreational area located in Madera County, California, within the Sierra National Forest, **approximately 14 mi (23 km) miles south of the entrance to Yosemite National Park.**

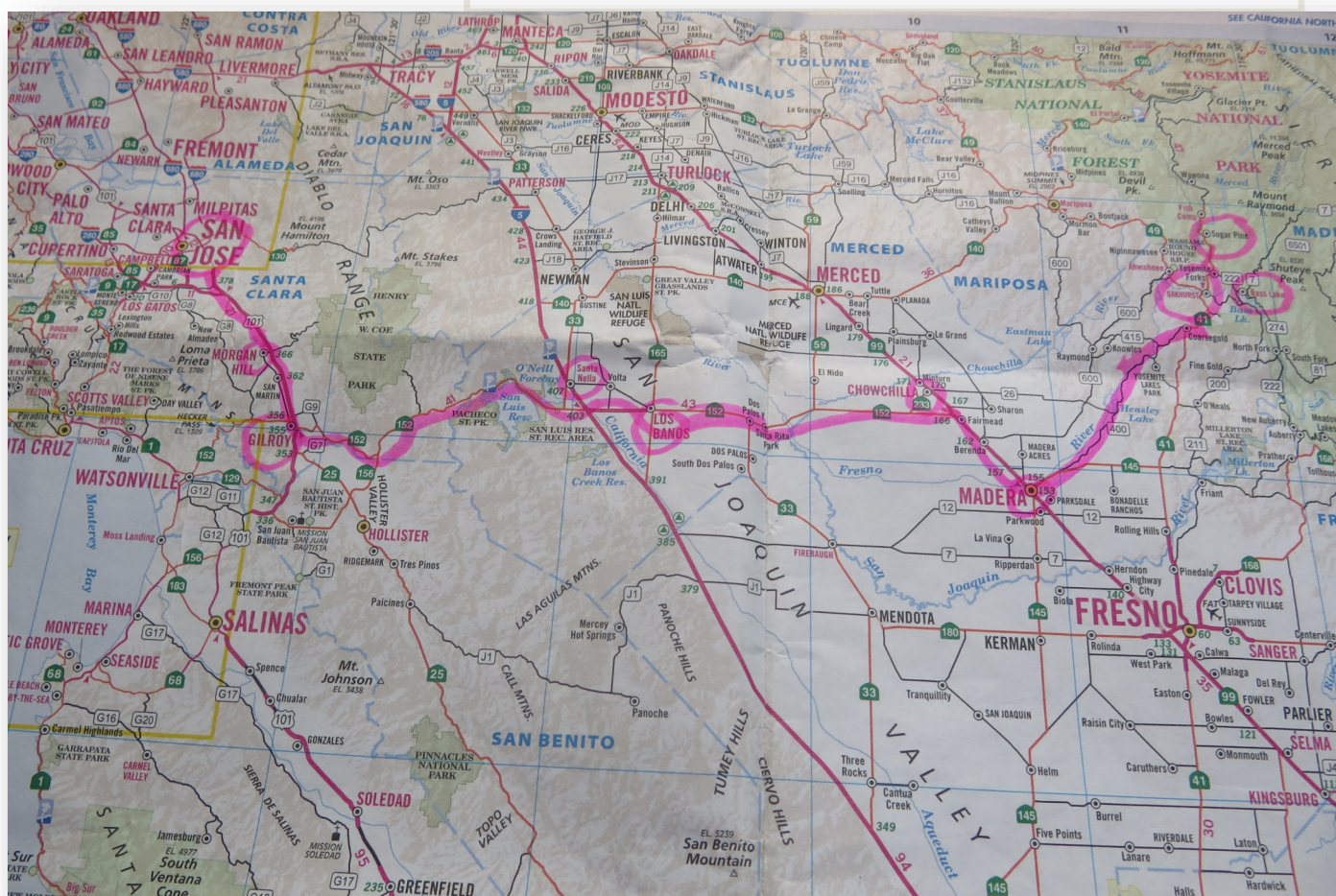




Photo History



Coming towards the culmination of our road trip we drove to San Jose from Yosemite which was quite a long journey as can be seen here



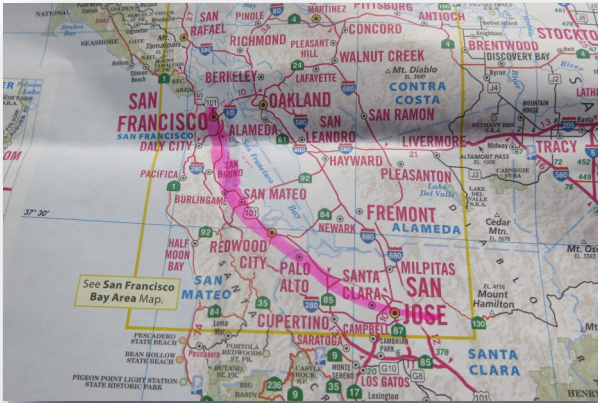
We had booked into Kasa The Row on 13th June and it turned out to be what is laughingly called a 'Virtual Front Desk'. What this meant is that there are NO STAFF on call whatsoever. As we arrived we were supposed to check in on our phone using our booking reference. Three attempts and each time it said "booking reference not recognised". Great start. We were waiting outside all this time. As someone exited we snuck into the lobby where a screen repeated endlessly instructions how to check in. No luck again. Phoning the 'Virtual Front Desk' we spoke to an assistant who talked us through it and I had to take selfies which again took three attempts before they were accepted. Then a driving licence scan was required. We were then issued with a code which was for our door and lobby entrance. Lynn heard a noise from a hidden office and the general manager was there and sympathised with us saying he was glad to help and it was lucky he was there as he had only called in on the off chance. It transpired that our room code was wrong and the remote was missing. He agreed that 50% of guests did not like the system and related a visit he had made to his Texas unit where he was unable to gain access due to an IT glitch and he knew how the system operated. I argued that in San Jose there were many IT folk who were totally used to doing everything on line but this is NOT hospitality as I know it. He agreed. Suffice it to say that when we eventually got to our room (after 45 minutes of sheer frustration) and 'high fived' the keypad which gave us 30 seconds to enter we were exhausted. We then had a short, and boring, local walk and then returned to our room and left early the following morning

So, we saw virtually nothing of San Jose and made a mental note to avoid 'Virtual Front Desks' like the plague (until such a time when that's the only way available to check into a hotel)





Photo History



We left San Jose and drove the last leg of our road trip to San Francisco . We dropped our cases off at the hotel and then returned the car to Avis which we had chosen as it was very close to the hotel. The drive was around 50 miles and took approx. 1 hour. We were glad to have no car for the last two days as we always prefer walking in cities without parking and driving hassles.



At the foot of The Golden Gate Bridge is a delightful walk where indigenous wild plants are growing





We saw a whole fleet of these cars. They are used for digital mapping of the whole of San Francisco

Some are driverless



..around San Francisco





Photo History



Franciscan Crab
Restaurant at
Fisherman's
Wharf





Known as the “Crookedest Street in the World,” **Lombard Street** is one of San Francisco's most popular landmarks.





Photo History



A great crab sandwich at Nick's Lighthouse on Fisherman's Wharf





Photo History



Enjoying ourselves





When this cruise ship berthed the 6500 passengers caused total gridlock with cabs, passengers and cases, food deliveries etc...the traffic along the shore road was at a standstill





A photograph of a multi-story building with a grey stucco facade. The building features a prominent external metal fire escape on the left side. On the right side, there are two red balconies with decorative railings. The ground floor has arched doorways with red doors. A yellow house number '1232' is visible on the wall. Power lines and a utility box are also present.



Photo History



We saw some great architecture as we walked around





Photo History

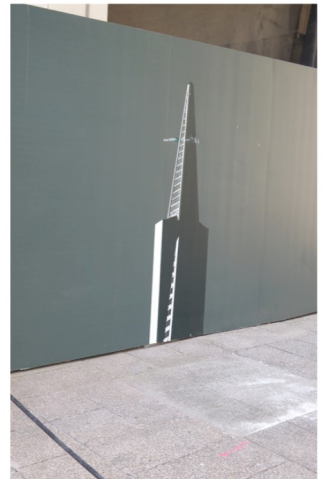






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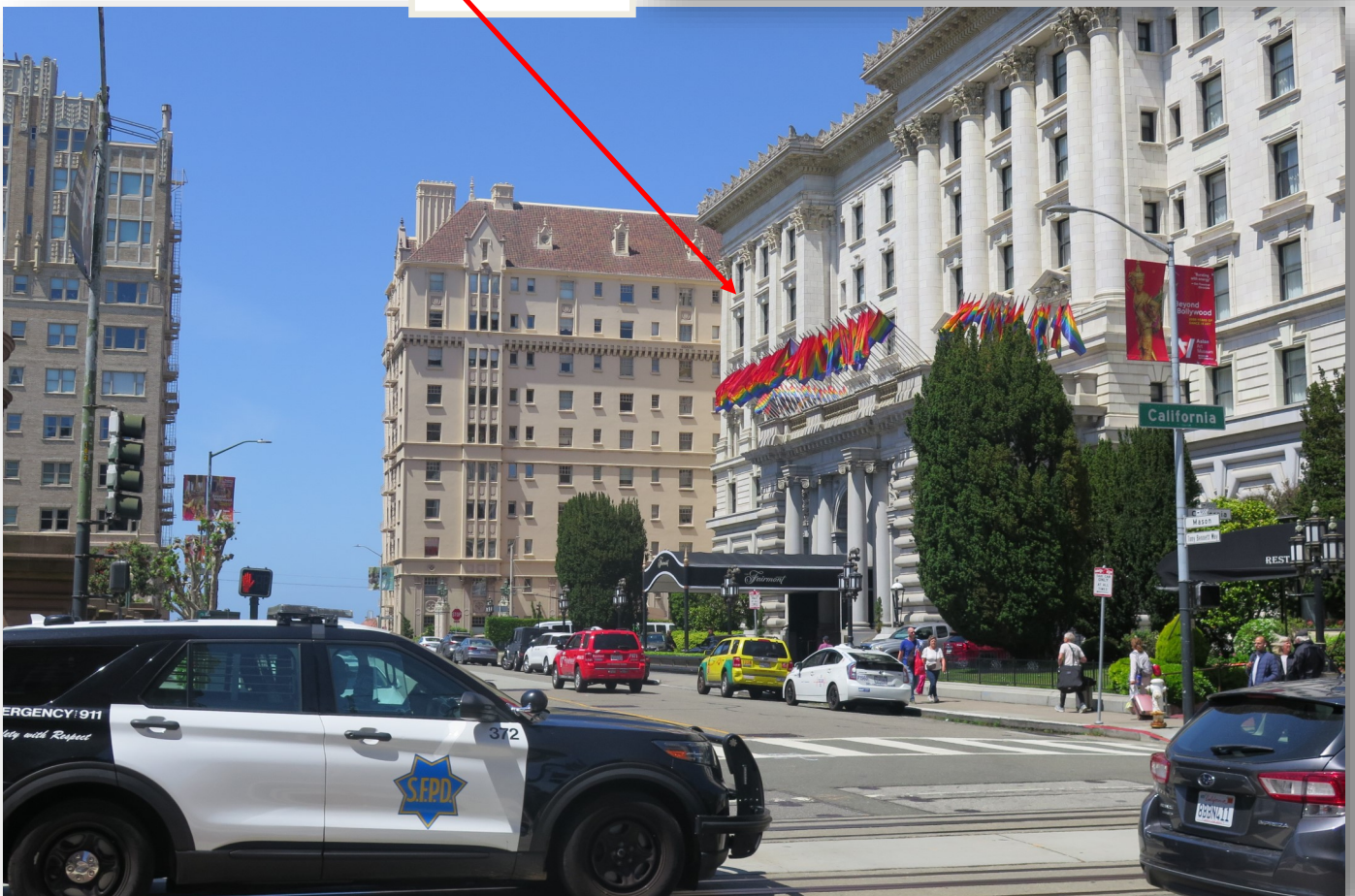
Gay Pride week was approaching and San Francisco celebrated it in many ways



Flags high above the city centre

Church steps in Gay Pride colours

The Fairmont Hotel with a multi-flag display











We spent a whole day walking from Fisherman's Wharf, along the shore (from Pier 39 to Pier 1) and then up those famous steep, steep roads in hot sunshine and it was a very tiring day ...but fascinating





This is Pier 39...very commercialised but well maintained with flowers everywhere and its pontoons of seals basking just below it



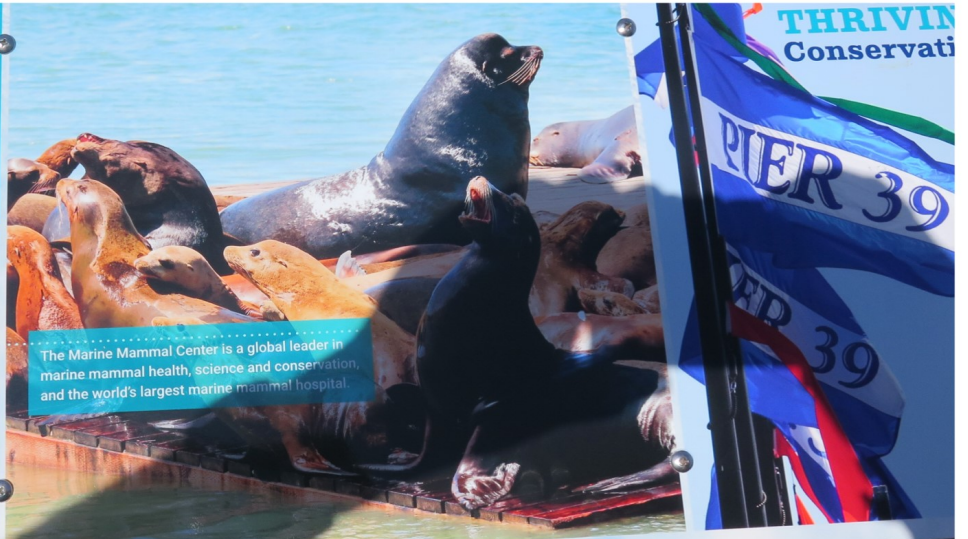


Why are the SEA LIONS at PIER 39?

In 1990, shortly after a major earthquake hit
San Francisco, California sea lions began
coming out on the docks here in front of you.
? The Marine Mammal Center's experts
have there are a few reasons:



1. Abundance of food in nearby waters
2. Protection from predators like sharks and orcas
3. Availability of comfortable space to rest



The Marine Mammal Center is a global leader in
marine mammal health, science and conservation,
and the world's largest marine mammal hospital.









A moody shot of a moody place...Alcatraz







This small immaculate park appeared like an oasis in the middle of the financial district. We flopped onto a seat to rest and were surrounded by locals sunbathing and enjoying the green breathing space in the unforgiving tall 'mountains' all around it





Photo History



Our hotel, the Riu was very comfortable but despite being only three stories high was large accommodating 1200 guests in 500 rooms. Naturally breakfast was a high point for everyone and the self service buffets were incredibly well

organised with a reception area showing people to their table guides who cleared and seated everyone in a minimum of time. Then everyone seemed to dart around filling their plates with massive portions. It was a fascinating sight to see and explained the large mountains of flesh all round us





In the hotel courtyard there were fire pits with seats round them and these proved really popular at night time

Walking around the shoreline was very easy

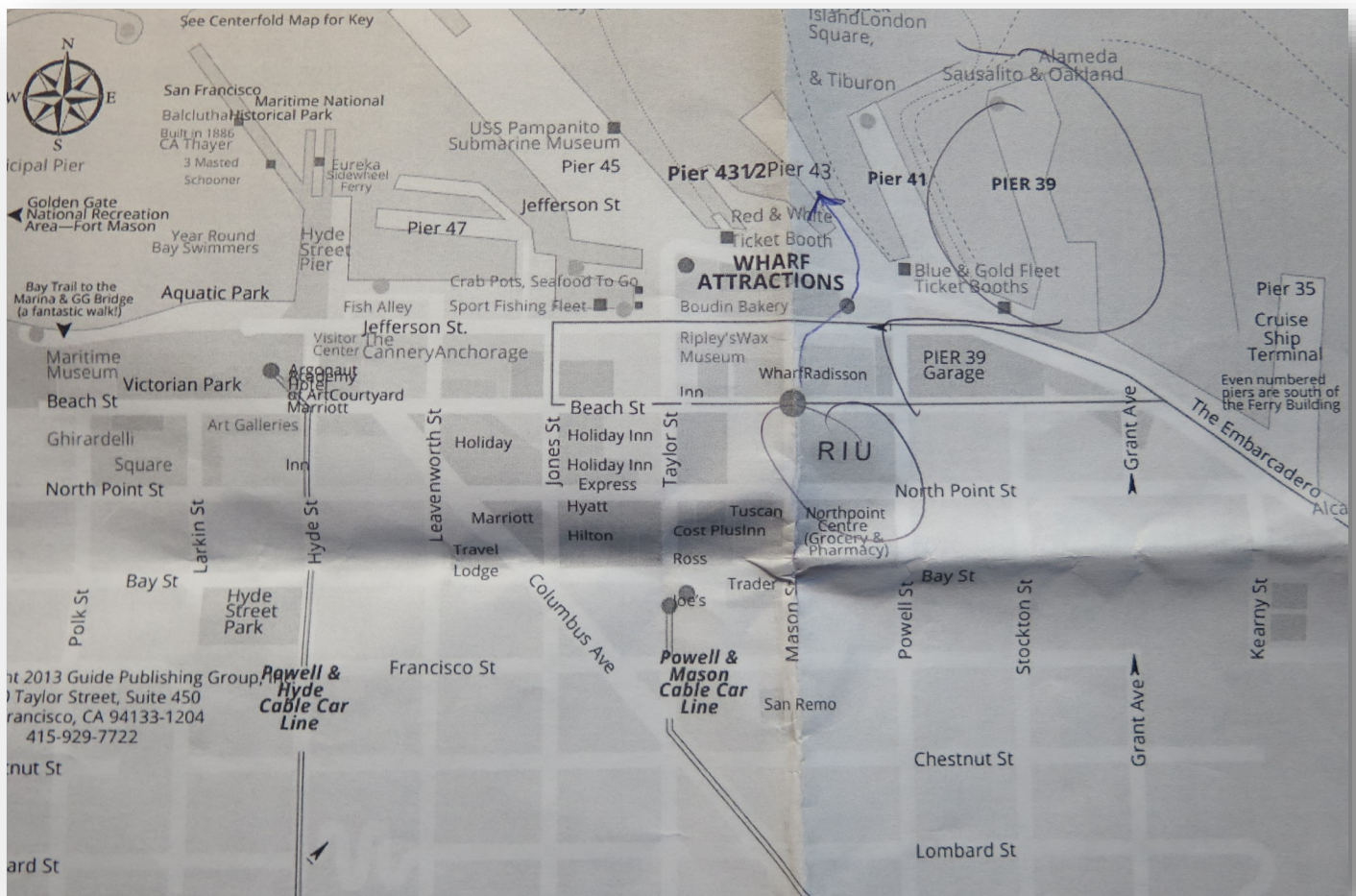
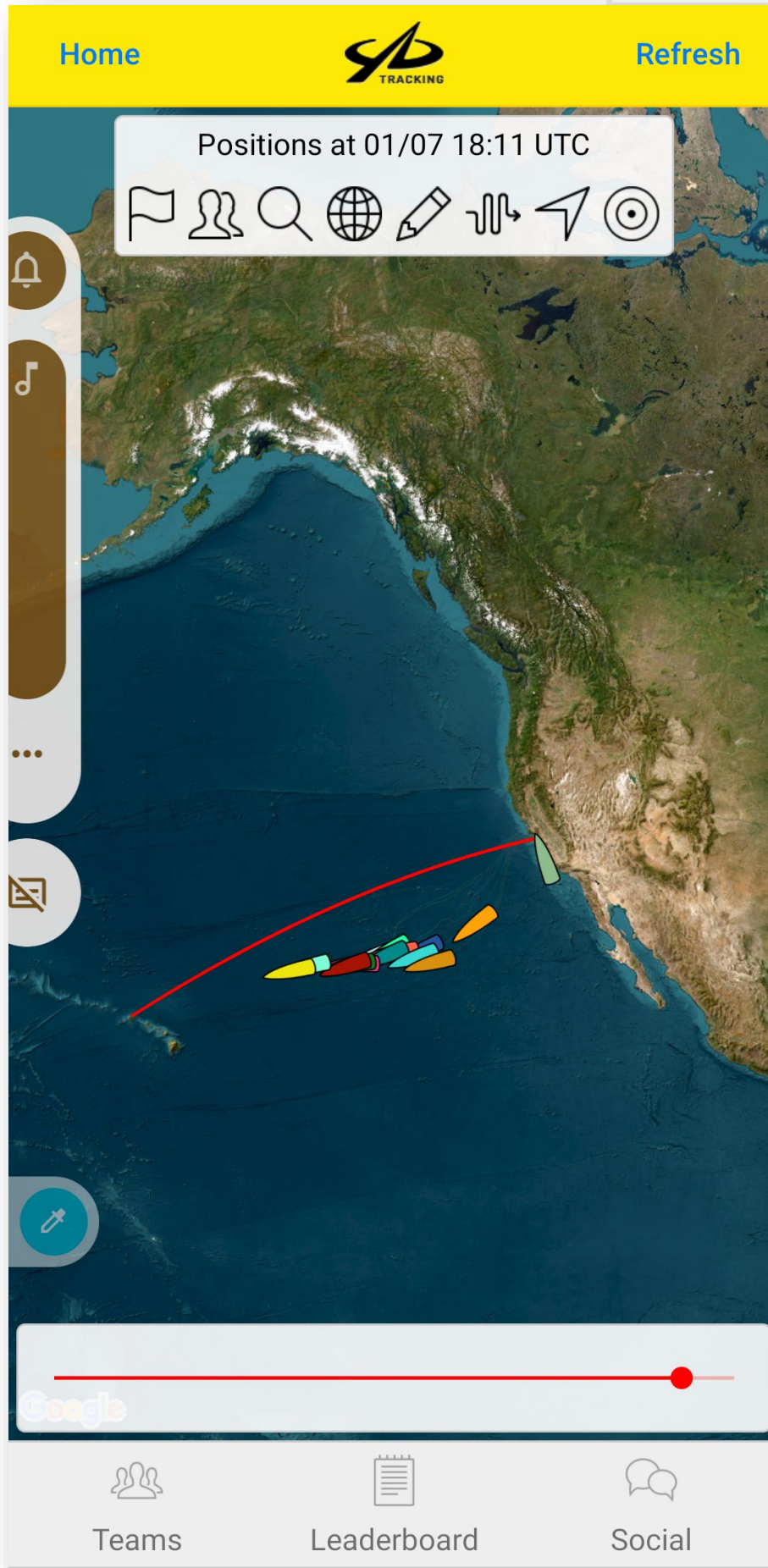




Photo History



We are still tracing the Rowers on the app and it is amazing feat of endurance.





Crew (no)	Miles to go (nautical)	Country
3	1414	
4	1217	UK
5	1707	UK
4	705	
4	795	
4	1388	
4	1054	
4	992	
2	1469	
4	1028	
3	2166	
3	1236	UK
3	1272	

At the time of entering these positions they have been rowing since 12th June (when we saw them at Monterey) That is 22 days and the last team still have 2166 nautical miles to row and even the leader has over 700 nautical miles still. That is totally remarkable and maybe I can update these figures before I print these pages



London commuting is terrible but this seems even worse





Photo History



This is the end of the 4th Photo History and 1 BLOG from our USA Road Trip.

As you can see it was very, very varied and I think the Blog and photos accurately represent our ups and downs and sometimes photos say it all and sometimes one needs to express ones feelings in writing. Anyway, the idea is that at future times we (or anyone else that may be interested) can look at these books and (hopefully) enjoy our way of recording our travels.

Thanks for your patience if some (or all) was totally boring

Ralph July 2023

